BULLETIN ON AGEING

No. 2/1991

Three main themes provide the focus for current United Nations initiatives on ageing: a day, an anniversary year and a decade-long strategy. In 1991, for the first time, 1 October is being celebrated as the International Day for the Elderly. The Day is being observed throughout the world, including at United Nations offices.

A draft global strategy on ageing for the decade 1992-2001 is under preparation. The core element is a short list of global targets on ageing to be reached by the year 2001. These will be reported in detail in a later issue of the Bulletin *and are mentioned briefly in this issue.*

Activities reported in this issue include: the third global inquiry on ageing, to begin in 1992; and the establishment of the Banyan Fund.

United Nations activities

Setting targets on ageing for the year 2001

The United Nations is currently developing a draft global strategy on ageing for the decade 1992-2001. Its core element is a set of targets for the year 2001, together with related programmes and innovations. Wide-ranging formal and informal consultations on the draft will be held in 1992.

Note: **The spelling of the word "ageing" has been changed to conform to the preferred form given in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 8th ed. (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990).**

Several meetings to be held in 1992 will contribute to setting and reaching the targets. These include an expert-group meeting on defining the targets, to be held at Vienna by the United Nations Office at Vienna/Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs (UNOV/CSDHA); a meeting on the quality of life of the elderly in a united Europe, to be held in Czechoslovakia by the European Federation for the Welfare of the Elderly, in cooperation with the European Exchange Centre on Gerontology; a global conference on the changing status and emerging roles of the elderly in the twenty-first century, to be held in India by the International Federation on Ageing; an international conference on population ageing, to be held in the United States of America by San Diego University; and an international colloquium of elderly persons to be held in Spain by the International Federation of Associations for the Elderly.

After these and other consultations, a set of draft global targets will be submitted to the General Assembly of the United Nations in the fourth quarter of 1992 for review and endorsement. Thereafter, the targets will serve to channel resources, attention and energies on a select number of feasible activities. The International Plan of Action on Ageing* will provide the broad framework for the specific activities to be undertaken in reaching the targets.

System-wide cooperation for 1992 and beyond

Forty entities within the United Nations system are concerned with ageing and have been invited to observe 1992 as the tenth anniversary

*Adopted by the World Assembly on Ageing, held at Vienna from 26 July to 6 August 1982, and subsequently endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 37/51 of 3 December 1982.

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of the World Assembly on Ageing. The fourth inter-agency meeting on ageing, which UNOV/CSDHA hosted at Vienna from 21 to 22 February 1991, gave rise to a number of commemorative proposals. At the time of writing, commemorative activities include: the issue of a United Nations stamp on ageing, booklets and television programmes for the public, a statistical wall-chart, an information kit and video on elderly women, and innumerable articles and journals devoted to the topic of ageing as it relates to health, housing, labour, social security, education, the family, and other matters dealt with by entities of the United Nations system.

The fifth inter-agency meeting on ageing will be held at Vienna in the first quarter of 1993 to review the anniversary activities and to draft a collaborative strategy on ageing for the 1990s. As agreed at the fourth meeting, special attention will be given: to expanding the scope of operations of the United Nations Trust Fund for Ageing; to coordinating a global information campaign to raise public awareness of issues related to ageing; and to determining how the elderly of developing countries, often living in rural areas and illiterate, could be reached and involved in activities on ageing during the decade 1992-2001.

1 October: International Day for the Elderly

The General Assembly, in its resolution 45/106 of 14 December 1990, designated 1 October as International Day for the Elderly, to be observed for the first time on 1 October 1991 throughout the world.

By designating a special Day for the elderly, the Assembly was giving recognition to the contributions of the elderly to development and also drawing attention to a demographic phenomenon: the greying of populations, the age of ageing.

The activities suggested by UNOV/CSDHA for observing the Day included statements by heads of State, observances at United Nations offices throughout the world, photographic and poster displays in public areas, and news announcements on radio and television and in the press. These activities will be reported in the next issue of the *Bulletin*.

UNOV/CSDHA has issued commemorative posters for this Day and distributed 3,000 of them to Member States, national coordinating mechanisms on ageing and non-governmental organizations world wide. Three photographs from the poster are shown in the present issue of the *Bulletin*.

Third global inquiry on ageing begins in 1992 for review by the Commission for Social Development

In the first quarter of 1992, UNOV/CSDHA will begin the third global inquiry on the implementation of the International Plan of Action on Ageing. The first and second inquiries were made in 1984 and 1988 and the results were reviewed by the Commission for Social Development at its twenty-ninth and thirty-first sessions held at Vienna in 1985 and 1989, respectively. The results of the third inquiry will be reviewed by the Commission at its thirty-third session to be held in 1993.

The Commission for Social Development, a functional body of the Economic and Social Council, comprised of 32 Member States, meets biennially. At its thirty-second session, held at Vienna from 11 to 20 February 1991, it focused, in its discussions on ageing, on three items: preparing for the anniversary year in 1992; target-setting for the year 2001; and drafting a set of United Nations principles for older persons. Extensive discussions on a draft set of United Nations principles for older persons resulted in a text that will be reviewed and possibly endorsed by the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session in 1992.

A wide-ranging general discussion was also held by the Commission on the question of ageing. One of the main concerns was how autonomy might be maintained as people grew older, an issue being tackled by several Governments, with policies being formulated: *(a)* to improve the standard of living of the elderly; *(b)* to increase financial assistance through a pension system; *(c)* to extend the coverage of the pension system; *(d)* to reintegrate the unemployed elderly into the labour market; *(e)* to combat age stereotypes; and *(f)* to promote self-help initiatives among the elderly. One welcome trend was the growth of institutional development.

The role of voluntary and non-governmental organizations was praised by many representatives and some called upon non-governmental organizations to assist them in coping with the acute shortage of support facilities for vulnerable groups such as the aged.

Concern was expressed at demographic trends world wide, but particularly in Africa, a continent that in the 1980s had seen its living standards decline drastically. The concomitant reduction in social expenditure had had serious repercussions on the welfare of the elderly.

Changing family structures, as a result of urbanization, migration, economic crises and war, had left many of the elderly destitute. The process of modernization was gradually eroding the privileged position that the elderly enjoyed in many traditional societies.

It was felt that the Ageing Unit, UNOV/CSDHA, should be strengthened and many representatives believed that the United Nations should intensify its efforts and operational activities in the field of ageing.

Reference was made to the commonly occurring phrase "within existing resources", and it was suggested that for the social development programmes of the United Nations to be strengthened, funding should preferably come from within the regular budget rather than from voluntary contributions and other extrabudgetary sources. In this way, a certain measure of constraint could be eliminated, or at least reduced, and growth of the social programmes and strategies ensured.

Banyan Fund

By the end of the century, there will be over 600 million elderly people in the world, and 25 years into the next century, this figure will double to 1.2 billion. On the global average, resources to respond to this situation are not growing anywhere near as fast as the numbers of the elderly. The gap between needs and resources continues to widen.

An initiative to bridge this gap has been taken by the Secretariat of the United Nations and a group of eminent persons. The process began in September 1989, when the Secretary-General of the United Nations convened a meeting of eminent persons in New York. The meeting recognized that considerable sums of private finance were apparently available for development assistance but were not being channelled through the United

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Margaret J. Anstee, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna, and Everald Compton, President of the Board of Directors of the Banyan Fund, signing the Agreement

Nations on account of the existing system of multilateral assistance that created the impression of a gap between donor and project.

The meeting agreed on the desirability of establishing an independent, international foundation on ageing, under the patronage of the United Nations, to act as a broker for the considerable funds that were apparently available but not accessible to the United Nations. A task force of some of the eminent persons was therefore constituted, and this initiative was endorsed by the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session. In December 1989, the task force met at the United Nations Office at Vienna and developed a plan for an international foundation.

This plan was submitted to a second meeting of eminent persons held at Paris in April 1990. The meeting amended and approved the plan and set up an Organizing Committee for the Establishment of the Banyan Foundation. The Committee met twice, at Washington, D.C., in October 1990, and at Paris, in December 1990, and took the final preparatory steps for the Banyan Foundation to be functioning by 1991. The General Assembly endorsed these activities at its forty-fifth session. In May 1991, the Banyan Fund Association: a World Fund for Ageing was established.

The main goal of the Banyan Fund is to promote activities that enable the elderly to remain independent and to contribute to society in the context of the International Plan of Action on Ageing. The Banyan Fund will serve to secure or handle funds from corporations, charitable organizations, foundations and individuals, and will allocate them for specific projects and programmes on ageing, especially in the developing countries.

The Banyan Fund is located in France and incorporated as a private non-profit association under French law. Its statutes provide for its conversion into the Banyan Foundation as soon as it has accumulated the equity capital required by French law.

Although it is autonomous and private, the Banyan Fund is under the patronage of the United Nations. The relationship between the two organizations is governed by a Special Relationship Agreement that was signed by the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna and the President of the Board of Directors of the Banyan Fund on 3 May 1991.

Further information on the Fund may be obtained from the United Nations Office at Vienna or directly from the Banyan Fund, 22 rue Mendes France, 77200 Torcy, France.

Joint seminar

Organized by HelpAge International in cooperation with UNOV/CSDHA, a seminar was held at Vienna from 15 to 17 July 1991 entitled "Societies in change and transition: meeting the needs of the elderly; the role of voluntary organizations". The first of its kind, the seminar was intended to bring together newly established non-governmental organizations in Central and Eastern Europe to examine and further develop their capabilities for providing care for the elderly, and to suggest measures to integrate the elderly into the community and into national development plans.

The following Governments were represented: Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Ukraine and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, as well as a wide range of non-governmental organizations from those countries.

The Director-General of UNOV/CSDHA paid tribute to the work of HelpAge International and said that such a cooperative effort was a significant new development within the United Nations, and hoped that the trend would continue. She drew attention to the first International Day for the Elderly on 1 October and to the tenth anniversary in 1992 of the World Assembly on Ageing.

In alerting the international community to the demographic phenomenon of ageing, she felt that the United Nations was making a timely response to the situation. There was a chance that steps could be taken to avert some of its more serious social consequences, thereby pre-empting a crisis.

The Director of the Social Development Division, UNOV/CSDHA, commended HelpAge International for its creativity and operational know-how and expressed the hope that the seminar would be the first of many similar ventures. Non-governmental organizations had now become an important partner in international dialogue, he said, and he was glad to see that relations between the United Nations and the non-governmental community had greatly expanded in recent years.

The Chief Executive of HelpAge International welcomed the seminar as a unique opportunity for dialogue. He regretted that the International Plan of Action on Ageing had not had the expected response, owing perhaps to ageing being overshadowed internationally by other major issues such as the environment and drug abuse.

The informal nature of the seminar allowed much flexibility for information exchange. The organization and funding of residential and domiciliary programmes for the care of the elderly

seemed to be the areas of greatest concern to the participants. One area considered to need further exploration was that of cooperation between Governments and non-governmental organizations, a relatively new concept for most of the participating countries.

It was suggested that a definition of "Countries in change and transition" should be formulated that would accurately reflect the current sad economic realities of countries in Central and Eastern Europe and enable them to be considered more favourably for the receipt of international development assistance. Legal protection for the elderly and the assessment of service requirements were also subjects of much interest.

The seminar recommended that specific projects should be developed by the participants and UNOV/CSDHA, and that HelpAge International should be informed of the advisory services needed for their implementation. Subject to the availability of resources, a seminar will be convened in 1992 for reviewing such projects.

Carrying cacao on the Solomon Islands

Activities of non-governmental organizations

International survey of social and cultural activities

The International Federation of Associations for the Elderly (FIAPA) was founded in 1980 by four European associations for the elderly. Currently, FIAPA, which has neither religious nor political affiliations, has a membership of over 100 million persons, with member associations in Europe, Africa, America and Oceania, covering some 25 countries. Since 1985, it enjoys consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations and with the Council of Europe.

An international survey has been carried out by FIAPA on the social and cultural activities of associations of the elderly. The sample was wide, consisting of 2,000 questionnaires, distributed in 144 countries. In some countries, however, associations for the elderly do not exist; so the results of the survey mainly reflect the situation in Europe, with the remaining continents accounting for just 20 per cent of the sample.

The survey shows that associations for the elderly view their main function as essentially a social one. The elderly are encouraged to become personally involved in giving each other mutual assistance, in taking part in leisure-time activities and in undertaking educational and training projects.

These voluntary associations cooperate with social welfare agencies, organizations for the handicapped and the handicapped themselves, and participate in the fight against social ills such as drug abuse and alcoholism.

Inter-generational and inter-cultural activities play a significant role for most of the associations; a large number of elderly persons are involved in professional training, private tuition and literacy programmes. Many associations actively support such causes as peace, human rights, famine relief and the abolition of racism.

Cultural activities feature prominently. Some two thirds of the associations organize outings and excursions and about half organize holidays and longer trips. Permanent education is not neglected; one third of the associations arrange lectures, slide shows and courses in foreign and regional languages.

Arts and crafts courses, often based on existing local or regional traditions, are very popular, giving older persons scope for self-expression through developing, or even discovering for the first time, their creative talents. Over a quarter of the associations feature music and dance events in their programmes. In the European associations, there is considerable interest in literary discussion groups, art circles and drama groups.

Together, these associations are helping to project a new image of the elderly in society, as well as developing the idea of self-help and voluntary service. Not only are they playing a major role in combating the isolation and marginalization of the elderly, but they are also contributing to the development of a mentality whereby age will no longer be seen as synonymous with inactivity and withdrawal from life.

Country review

Canada: Seniors' Secretariat

With over 10 per cent of the population of Saskatchewan aged 65 years or more, it is not surprising that the province's Seniors' Secretariat is kept busy. The Secretariat develops policies and programmes, acts as a contact point for seniors with the Government and serves as the programme arm of the Minister Responsible for Seniors.

The establishment of the Secretariat in 1989 was the culmination of nearly two decades of the active involvement of the Saskatchewan government in seniors' issues. Past accomplishments include: *(a)* the founding of the Commission on Seniors (1973); *(b)* the establishment of the Senior Citizens' Provincial Council (1975); *(c)* the creation of the position of Provincial Gerontologist (late 1970s); and *(d)* the founding of the Seniors' Bureau (1984). In 1988, the Bureau and the Council were amalgamated, and in 1989, the Seniors' Secretariat was formed.

The Secretariat works closely with the Family Foundation, sharing the same permanent head and minister in his capacity as Minister Responsible for Seniors and Minister of the Family. This is the first time in Canada that there has been a minister whose primary concern is addressing the needs and concerns of seniors and families.

The Secretariat is also unusual in that it administers programmes, rather than functioning in a strictly advisory capacity. These programmes include the Senior Citizens' Heritage Programme, the Saskatchewan Income Plan, and grants for Senior Citizens' Services.

Since 1986, the Heritage Programme has provided annual grants to seniors of up to $Can 500 per person and $Can 700 per couple to help them maintain a dignified, independent lifestyle. In 1989, over 71,000 grants were awarded. The Income Plan, established in 1975, supplements the incomes of over 22,000 low-income seniors, up to a maximum of $Can 80 monthly.

The 15-member Senior Citizens' Provincial Council is another valuable source of information and ideas. The Council, which represents the views of seniors and advises the Minister on senior's concerns, has produced publications on many timely issues.

Further information may be obtained from: Brenda Righetti, Assistant Secretary, Saskatchewan Seniors' Secretariat, 2151 Scarth Street, Regina, Saskatchewan, S4P 3Z3, Canada (Telephone: (306) 787-7478; telefax: (306) 787-0694).

Source: Exchange, spring 1991, published by the Government of Canada.

China: National Committee on Ageing

The China National Committee on Ageing (CNCA) was established in 1982 and comprises a country-wide network of committees at the community, city, county and provincial levels. CNCA holds national conferences on a regular basis and has its own publishing house. Among its publications are a weekly newspaper and a monthly journal.

In 1986, CNCA was instrumental in setting up the Gerontological Society of China and in 1988, it established the Research Centre on Ageing. CNCA is responsible for proposing legislation on the rights of the elderly and is currently participating in the drafting of national legislation. A Plan of Action on Ageing in China has already been prepared and is currently before the State Council for approval and adoption.

Training is an important part of the functions of CNCA. Nine national training courses have been carried out, with 1,500 trainees from committees on ageing at the county level and above, and 15 persons from CNCA have been sent to Japan and Malta for short-term training courses on gerontology.

Since its foundation, CNCA has been cooperating with many other major international organizations for the elderly. In 1986, for instance, CNCA, together with a non-governmental organization in the United States, sponsored an international seminar on population ageing in Beijing. This seminar was the first of its kind to be held in China.

In 1985, a five-year Sino-Japanese comparative study on population ageing towards policy formulation was initiated, funded by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). In 1990, UNFPA funded another five-year project on supporting systems for the elderly in China. A Sino-Japanese comparative study on population ageing also began in 1990.

CNCA is cooperating with UNOV/CSDHA on several activities to be launched in the decade 1992-2001, details of which will be announced later.

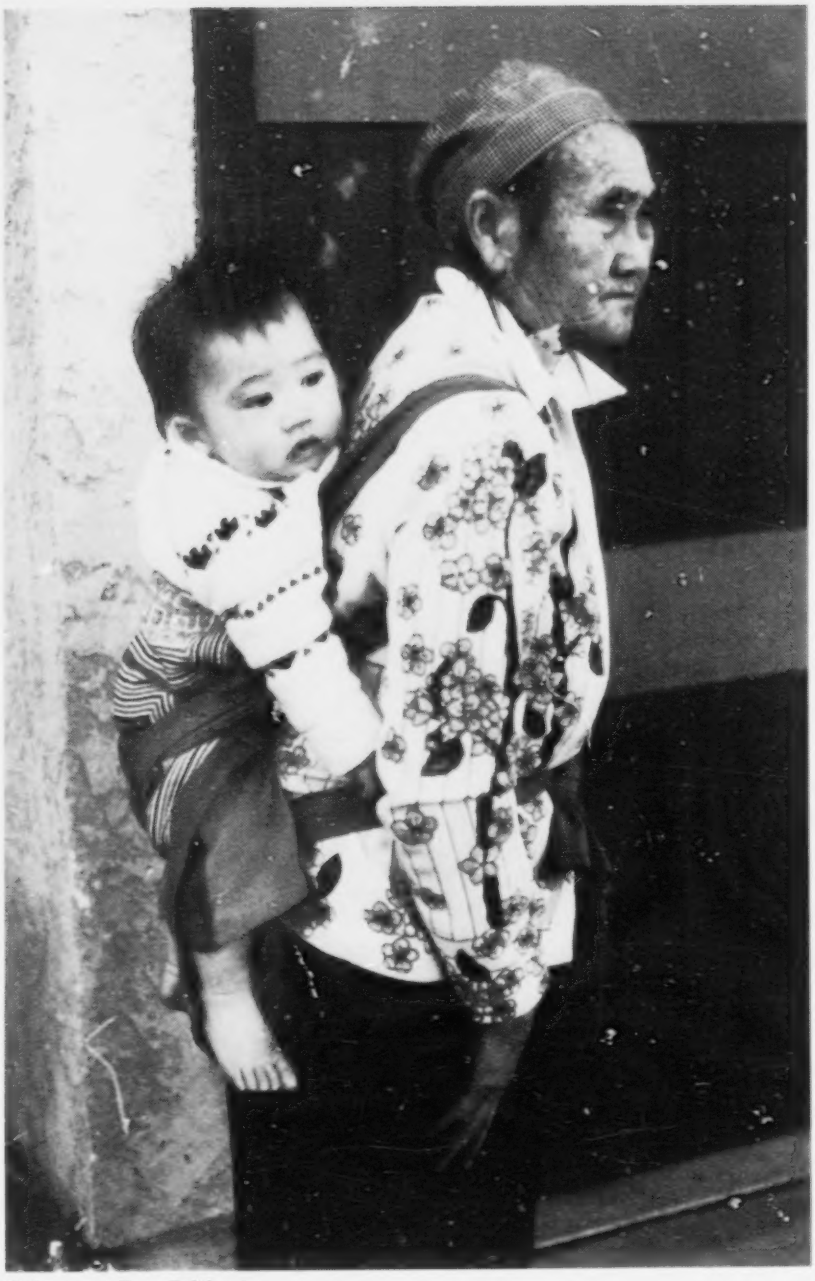
Egypt: Community actions

It is difficult to imagine spending the rest of one's days living and working on a rubbish dump, but for the *Zabbaleen* (a word meaning those who live on the rubbish), this is their reality: picking through Cairo's discarded refuse and living as social outcasts.

Probably 4,000 *Zabbaleen* work in retrieving recyclable materials from the quantities of refuse generated each day in the Egyptian capital. Yet one group of people, the Coptic Sisters of Cairo, has been working to improve their conditions and in particular those of some 200 elderly people who faced a bleak future.

In 1985, contact was made with Help the Aged in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and, with assistance from a European Community co-funding scheme, a programme was established with the Sisters to construct a multi-purpose centre for the elderly *Zabbaleen*.

Plans were drawn up for a two-storeyed centre that would provide



Taking a walk in California

medical, nutritional and recreational facilities for the older *Zabbaleen*. In the event, some 40 of the poorest elderly people came to join the programme. Accustomed only to the vast rubbish heaps and the appalling conditions of their makeshift homes, they found the new day-centre a great source of comfort.

In the common-room, a good meal is served once a day and social activities of all kinds are organized. The centre has a clinic that, besides giving priority to the elderly people, also provides a service to the rest of the *Zabbaleen* community. Burns and eye disease are the two most frequent ailments and the centre tries to provide both curative and preventative treatment.

The centre has also established an outreach programme for the elderly people who are unable to come to the centre. They are visited by medical staff and the Sisters themselves.

Source: AgeACTION, No. 4, summer 1991, published by HelpAge International.

Ghana: Ageing in a rapidly changing society

Until fairly recently, the topic of old age was not even discussed in Ghana. Such an attitude is understandable in a country whose population is relatively young and of which only a small proportion survives beyond middle age. While the family remains a strong force in maintaining the well-being of elderly people, certain trends in current economic and social policies are leading to a deterioration in that well-being.

There are now substantial numbers of elderly people, the care of whom society has not yet made provision for and of which society is largely ignorant owing mainly to untested assumptions and the lack of substantive research and information.

Consequently, the well-being of elderly people in a rapidly changing society like Ghana will gradually but steadily become a crucial problem, which deserves urgent attention on the part of the Government.

The breakup of the extended family system is leading to the increasing marginalization of elderly people. As long ago as 1962, the Population Council found that 18 per cent of the rural households interviewed had "come close to having lost contact with their educated children who migrated to the towns". In a more recent survey, it was discovered that the elderly people interviewed could not count on their adult children for support.

Although many African countries are trying to improve the general financial situation of elderly people, these efforts are generally only applied to the organized sector of employment. Unfortunately, as most Ghanians (approximately 90 per cent) are self-employed, working in the farming, fishing or craft sectors, they would not be covered by these efforts.

Not only is there a need therefore to recognize the potential force of an integrated family structure but also an urgency to institute concrete measures to strengthen the economic capacity

of families to continue to care for their elderly members.

Source: AgeACTION, No. 4, summer 1991, published by HelpAge International.

Kenya: Income-generating projects

In the absence of a national pension scheme for all older people, HelpAge Kenya is cooperating with the Ministry of Culture and Social Services to support elderly people in their own efforts to raise an income. The Mabatini goat-keeping project is run by a small committee, two thirds of which is composed of elderly people in the Kajiado district. The project site is some 80 kilometres south of Nairobi within the Rift Valley province, a sparsely populated arid area with little rainfall. Currently, 34 elderly people are participating in the project, which is open to anyone who is old and living in the project area.

The aim of the project is to improve the standard of living of the community. Before the project, people made a living as best they could by keeping chickens, begging, or brewing beer. HelpAge Kenya and the Ministry of Culture and Social Services provided each member of the self-help project with a goat. The original intention was that the offspring of the goats would enable the project to be run on a continuing basis, that the goats could be sold and the profits divided among the project members.

It was eventually decided that the goats would be looked after individually instead of being kept as a herd. One outcome of the project has been the improvement in the elderly people's status. In rural Kenya, people's position in society is measured by their ownership of cattle or land. For these elderly people, owning a goat has given them a sense of pride and importance, and also earned them the respect of the rest of the community.

One of the main reasons for the success of the project is that it has been of immediate benefit to the elderly people involved; there is no middle group between the elderly people in the project and the funding organization.

Source: AgeACTION, No. 4, summer 1991, published by HelpAge International.

Mozambique: Developing policy on ageing

The Government of Mozambique, with funding from Help the Aged, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, is carrying out a survey of the needs of elderly people throughout Mozambique in order to establish a policy for ageing and the care of the aged.

The Government's department for elderly and disabled people is co-operating with Help the Aged on several projects to supply fresh water to the internally displaced community within Mozambique. Help the Aged has also been supporting the two State-run residential homes in Maputo. It is planned to start training in care of the aged in the coming months and to look at ways of expanding the residential homes' services for elderly people in the community.

Source: AgeACTION, No. 4, summer 1991, published by HelpAge International.

Syrian Arab Republic: Priority for age-related issues

The Syrian Arab Republic reports that, recently, elderly persons have had priority in the projects of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour. The reasons are: the increased number of elderly persons, the high level of the health services generally available and improved health education. The fact that women are increasingly taking jobs outside the home means that a number of elderly persons are deprived of the care that they traditionally received within the family. With the erosion of the extended family system, rising prices are placing a heavy burden on nuclear families.

In the Syrian Arab Republic, every insured person who reaches the age of 60 and for whom not less than 180 consecutive monthly contributions, or 240 non-consecutive monthly contributions, have been paid is entitled to an old-age pension.

In 1981, a law came into effect authorizing the Minister of Social Affairs and Labour to establish homes for the care of elderly persons. These homes are under the technical supervision of the Ministry and are subject administratively and financially to the executive office of the provincial councils. They take in and house disabled and elderly persons, attend to their health needs and provide them with food and clothing.

The country hopes that its existing services for the elderly might be developed further in cooperation with international organizations, as well as with countries where considerable progress has already been made in the area of care for the elderly. Such cooperation might take the form of study and training fellowships, as well as training courses, for the staff of homes for elderly persons.

Publications

A new United Nations publication, *The World Ageing Situation, 1991*, to be published in early 1992, reports on the current situation of the world's elderly. According to projections, by the year 2025, the absolute number of the elderly will reach 1.2 billion, with 72 per cent living in developing regions. Based on these statistics, the report analyses those trends that have major implications for policy-making. Other areas discussed include: the socio-economic impact of ageing; savings and investment; the impact of development on the ageing; strengthening the indirect economic contributions of the ageing; encouraging the employment option; providing social and economic support to old people without families; and the economic vulnerability of older women.

This comprehensive report is also specific enough to act as a guide for policy-making initiatives. Departing from the structure of the 1985 report, the report, in part three, focuses narrowly on eight key issues, with the emphasis on assisting developing countries in formulating policy. First, the issue is described, then the research findings are cited, illustrative data provided whenever possible, and options or alternative ways of approaching the issue presented. The general discussion is followed by "Country examples". The aim is to

provide information and ideas that Governments will find useful and subsequently act upon, by beginning an extensive policy assessment process that will ultimately lead to concrete action in the area of policy on ageing.

The author of the report, James H. Schulz, Professor of Economics, Policy Center on Aging, Heller School, Brandeis University, United States, has written over 80 books, reports and articles, and is one of the leading authorities in the United States on pensions and the economics of ageing.

From pyramid to pillar in Europe: a study

Europe's age pyramid is changing shape. As a longer life-span accompanies a declining birth rate, the ranks of the elderly are growing while the number of active young people is falling.

How can a shrinking number of active persons provide social protection for a growing number of non-working persons? A recent study published by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), entitled "From pyramid to pillar: population change and social security in Europe", provides guidance for planners as they seek to adapt national pension schemes to the new demographic situation.

Ageing is already a reality in most European countries, especially those of the European Community; for example, over 13 per cent of the inhabitants are aged over 65 in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom.

According to the study, in the European Community countries alone in the year 2025, the number of people over 65 years of age is expected to increase by 21 million, while that of potentially active young people between 20 and 39 years is expected to decline by over 15 million.

The trend toward an intensification of the phenomenon seems particularly marked in northern Europe, whose global population figure will diminish from 17.6 million to 17.3 million by 2025. For example, Sweden, while experiencing an increase of nearly 300,000 in the number of those over 65 years old, will experience a decrease of 600,000 in the number of inhabitants. Finland, still a young country, will see the level of ageing of those aged over 65 rise from 12.3 per cent in 1985 to 21 per cent in 2025.

In the over-65 age group, the oldest segment (80 years or over, which needs the most care) will continue to grow in relation to the other segment and to the whole population. In the European Community, it is expected that over 13 million persons will be in this age category in 2025, representing an increase of 4.3 million in 40 years.

After reviewing all possible options and initiatives already taken concerning the financing of pension schemes and granting of benefits, the study stresses the necessity of not losing sight of the fundamental objective of promoting social justice.

The study concludes that it is for the Governments and peoples of Europe to seek "solutions compatible with both moral and financial necessities" so that the health and, more generally, the interests of the elderly are not sacrificed "on the altar of economic rationalism as applied to social security".

Source: International Review (SI/18/91), 6 August 1991, United Nations Information Service, Geneva.

The *International Directory of Research and Researchers in Comparative Gerontology* is the first detailed compilation of recent research projects in comparative gerontology in developing and developed countries. The *Directory* is designed as an easy reference source for individuals interested in identifying comparative research and researchers in ageing in specialized areas or particular countries, cultures or racial and ethnic groups.

Tribal women in India

Covering the period 1980-1990, the *Directory* briefly describes over 250 studies and related papers and publications spanning a range of multidisciplinary topics from biochemistry to the use of leisure time. An extensive index is included, keyed to topical areas and the countries and cultures studied

Three types of comparative research in gerontology are included in the volume:

- Research comparing two or more countries or cultural systems;
- Research within a particular country comparing two or more ethnic or racial groups;
- Research in one country conducted by a citizen of another country.

International Directory of Research and Researchers in Comparative Gerontology, Charlotte Nusberg and Jay Sokolovsky, eds. (Washington, D.C., International Federation on Ageing, the Center for International Policy Analysis and Research and the Commission on Ageing and the Aged of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, 1991). $US 15. Available from: International Federation on Ageing, Publications Division, 1909 K Street, NW, Washington, D.C., United States of America, 20049.

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Elderly persons in development: Asia and the Pacific*

Regional situation

According to a paper prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), people aged 60 and over in Asia and the Pacific were estimated to have numbered 170 million (45 per cent of the world's elderly persons) in 1980.[1] It is estimated that this number will grow to 623 million by 2025. Asia and the Pacific will then have 56 per cent of the world's elderly persons, defined as those over 60 years old.[2]

It is commonly accepted that a population is aged if more than 10 per cent of its population is aged 60 and over. By that criterion, of the countries and areas in Asia and the Pacific, Australia, Hong Kong, Japan and New Zealand have reached the status of aged societies. By the year 2000, China, the Republic of Korea and Singapore will have joined the group of aged societies, and Sri Lanka will be on the verge of doing so. By the year 2020, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand will also have become aged societies. They will be followed soon after by Cambodia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Myanmar, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and Viet Nam.[3]

The five top-ranking developing countries in the region in terms of the absolute number of elderly persons in 1980 were China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan and Bangladesh, in descending order. They will retain these rankings in 2025. Together they will account for 44 per cent of the world's elderly people in that year.[2]

As a result of improvements in life expectancy throughout the region, more people are reaching the age of 60 and living longer afterwards. Therefore, the number of "old" old persons (those aged 70 and above) will rise in the region. Of these, a large proportion will be in need of care, especially those with disabilities.

Projections indicate that elderly persons tend to be concentrated in urban areas, but a majority will continue to be located in rural areas in most countries served by ESCAP. By the year 2000, of those aged 60 or more, about 71 per cent in South Asia, 68 per cent in South-East Asia, 54 per cent in east Asia and 50 per cent in the Pacific will still be living in rural areas.[4]

In almost all countries of the region, the number of elderly women exceeds that of elderly men. In view of projections indicating the continued longer life expectancy of women, the trend is one of increasing feminization of the elderly population.[5]

Policy implications

The phenomenon of ageing of societies in the region has a number of long-term policy implications. In particular, it suggests that countries of the region, especially the developing ones, should take early action to prepare for the ageing of their societies over the next three to four decades.[6] This action should be integrated with broader social development programmes to ensure that policies in areas such as health, housing, education and employment will be responsive to the ageing of societies. A central unifying factor in policy ought to be efforts to support people in their lifelong preparation for old age.

A policy focus on lifelong preparation for ageing could forestall a social crisis that might otherwise be expected as societies in the region continue to age. (Such a crisis in the future would be similar to the youth crisis currently being experienced by many countries in the region.) For example, without preparation, large numbers of the rapidly growing elderly population will be left without

*A paper presented to the Meeting of Eminent Persons on a Regional Social Development Strategy Towards the Year 2000 and Beyond held by ESCAP in Beijing, China, from 15 to 19 July 1991.

[1] *The World Ageing Situation: Strategies and Policies* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.5), p. 137.

[2] Ibid., p. 143.

[3] "Report to the Committee on Population and Social Development on policies and programmes to enhance the participation of the elderly in development" (E/ESCAP/PSD(2)/8), para. 2.

[4] *The World Ageing Situation* . . ., p. 152.

[5] "Studies on the integration of the ageing in development: legislation, social security and social services" (ST/ESCAP/703), pp. 16-20.

[6] "Report to the Committee . . .", paras. 23 and 39; and *Report of the World Assembly on Ageing, Vienna, 26 July-6 August 1982* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.82.I.16), chap. VI, para. 31 (e).

a functional role in society. They will not be able to work and, because of their large numbers and family fragmentation, many will not achieve the respected role that elderly people have held as sources of wisdom in traditional families and societies.[7] Nor will they have adequate access to a means of subsistence.

The main thrust of such a preparatory policy focus would be on individual responsibility in preparation for old age, particularly in the maintenance of good health and viable skills for prolonged economic participation and the accumulation of savings for future income maintenance. At the same time, it would be the role of public policy to provide individuals with the requisite support.

Whatever measures are provided for lifelong preparation for old age, many elderly people would still require social support. The issue of social security in old age involves three major areas: *(a)* family support for elderly members, especially those who are financially dependent and infirm; *(b)* community support through the provision of opportunities for employment and social interaction; and *(c)* State support for economic security and work opportunities, geriatric health care, housing and assistance in daily living.

The maintenance of a regular and adequate flow of income is a factor of special concern in old age. Several developing countries in the region have old-age pension schemes. However, the proportion of elderly persons covered by such schemes is low; too low in many cases to provide for a minimum standard of living.[8] Social security schemes are generally more comprehensive in the developed countries of the region, but even those schemes are under increasing strain as a result of the extended longevity of rising numbers of retirees. Public assistance to needy elderly persons also varies in scope. Such schemes exist in China, Hong Kong, India and Malaysia, among other countries and areas of the region covered by ESCAP.[9]

A number of countries in the region have recognized the significance of the issue of ageing societies and have turned their attention to the incorporation of policy measures in their national development plans. China, Pakistan, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Viet Nam are among the countries to have done so.[10]

A recent regional study[10] by ESCAP on legislation, social security and social services in support of elderly persons highlights the inadequacy of policy and programme measures to meet even current needs, let alone the needs of increasingly aged societies. Unless more attention and resources are devoted to this social group, the quality and scale of the effort will prove to be inadequate.

Proposals for national action and regional support

Measures encouraging: *(a)* lifelong preparation for old age; and *(b)* the provision of social security for elderly persons, together constitute a comprehensive policy approach on ageing as an integral part of a regional social development strategy.

While the societies of the region's countries are at different stages of the ageing process and therefore will need to give a different balance of consideration in devising programmes to meet objectives *(a)* and *(b)* in the foregoing paragraph, all countries need to take action on both fronts. Regional measures in support of that approach would focus on assistance to ESCAP members and associate members in the formulation and implementation of comprehensive policies on ageing.

Regional assistance in the formulation of national policies on ageing should emphasize the following conceptual issues and areas for action:

- A re-examination of the current chronological definition of "elderly" and "old age" to take into account national trends in longevity, the improved health of elderly persons and the changing capabilities of most elderly persons to continue active social participation well beyond the officially designated ages of retirement;

- A review of the assumptions governing age-dependency ratios, focusing on an examination of actual dependency circumstances, with a view to determining the productive status of elderly people, predicting changes in that status and thereby providing a basis for policies to maintain their productivity, including a revision of age-related employment policies;

- Examination of the health and work status and housing patterns of rural elderly people, in view of the predominantly rural character of the region and special situational needs of rural elderly people.

Based on a clarification of these conceptual issues, the specific rational action, with regional support, towards providing for security in old age could take the following forms:

- Support for the concept of assumption of individual responsibility in preparation for old age, with respect to the maintenance of healthy lifestyles, and the accumulation of financial and other assets for economic security;

- Development of measures for enhancing the productive potential of elderly persons, including the adjustment of current employment practices;

- Organization of elderly people into associations for mutual support, and to serve as channels for the expression of group needs;

- Provision of programmes for lifelong learning among the general population, with compensatory education for elderly people to help them keep abreast of new developments, thus promoting the inter-generational equality of knowledge;

- Development of the potential of non-governmental organizations to respond to the service needs of elderly persons;

- Provision of housing that permits the cohabitation of elderly persons with younger family members, as well as options for separate living arrangements for elderly persons in close proximity to sources of family support;

- Support for the organization of home-help services and nursing care for infirm elderly persons living with their families or alone in the community;

- Establishment of homes for elderly persons who, either by choice or by necessity, opt for this mode of housing and care;

- Encouragement of a more balanced sharing of family and community responsibilities for the care of

[7] "Studies on the integration . . .", p. 33; and *Report of the World Assembly . . .*, chap. VI, para. 25 (k).

[8] "Studies on the integration . . .", pp. 53-55.

[9] Ibid., pp. 56-57.

[10] Ibid., pp. 26-27.

infirm elderly persons (e.g. through fiscal policy incentives, housing benefits or flexible working hours);

- Construction of barrier-free environments that facilitate the mobility of elderly persons, especially those who are disabled;
- Regular updating of information on the social and economic status of each cohort of elderly persons, including the nature of their relationships with family members, their access to care, and the extent to which organized services meet their needs.

In view of the length and complexity of these proposals, it is further proposed that Governments in the region be encouraged to prepare policy frameworks for their implementation. To assist the developing countries of the region in the formulation of national policies, ESCAP would prepare a draft model national policy on ageing to be used as a guide by countries. ESCAP policy-related assistance would cover the following areas: initiation of lifelong preparation for old age by developing country populations; planning of comprehensive services for elderly persons through the enactment of legislation covering social security, health, housing and transport; creation of opportunities for the continued economic and social participation of the elderly; and addressing the issue of care of frail and elderly persons in the context of rapid social change.

The following steps, including regional support measures, should be considered:

- Preparation of country studies analysing the situation of elderly persons and the policies and programmes affecting their integration into society, and proposing specific policy measures addressing the items listed in paragraph 16 (a) to (c) above;
- Preparation of an analysis of the regional situation of elderly persons, using the country studies and other material available;
- Development of a draft model national policy on ageing encompassing lifelong preparatory measures and social and economic security and support in old age;
- Consideration of the draft model policy by regional expert and intergovernmental meetings with a view to its revision and endorsement;
- Dissemination of the model national policy on ageing to the developing countries of the region.

Subsequent to the dissemination of a model policy on ageing, regional support to developing countries in the region covered by ESCAP could be provided on the following matters:

- Adaptation of the model policy to the needs of particular developing countries of the ESCAP region and formulation of comprehensive national policies on ageing;
- Adoption and implementation of the national policies;
- Continuous review of the relevance and impact of the national policies;
- Revision of the national policies in the light of experience in their implementation.

REPORT SHEET

Please provide information, as available, for items you wish to be included in the international calendar of events or global database on ageing 1992-2001:

Project title _____

Starting date _____

Duration _____

Location _____

Executing agency _____

Street _____ City _____

Country _____ Fax _____ Telephone _____

Sponsoring agency _____

Cooperating agency _____

Funding sources _____

Beneficiaries/expected results _____

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